



**King County**

**Ron Sims**

King County Executive

**King County Charter Review Commission  
Public Hearing Summary – July 10, 2007  
Black Diamond Community Center, 6:30pm-8:00pm**

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Commissioner John Jensen chaired the meeting. Other commissioners in attendance were Tara Jo Heinecke, Terry Lavender, Mike Lowry, and Allan Munro.

Mr. Jensen gave opening remarks and introduced the commissioners.

Commission staff member Corrie Watterson gave a presentation on the charter and the charter review process.

Mr. Jensen then opened the floor for citizen comments. Fifteen citizens were present at the meeting, and thirteen made remarks.

**Summary of issues:**

Gregory Sender, on Enumclaw:

- Read a Seattle Times article by Republican state legislators Richard Debolt and Mike Hewitt on property taxes. The article argued that the Initiative 747 property tax limit should go back into effect.

Tom Carpenter, of unincorporated Renton, leader of the Four Creeks Unincorporated Area Council:

- There is a polarized environment between urban and rural residents. Need to have innovative solutions to this division, which go beyond politics. One idea is a bicameral county council, with one house chosen by population and the other by land area.
- Development needs to be more sensitive to the character of neighborhoods.

Steve Hammond, on Enumclaw, previous county councilmember:

- The UACs have no teeth.
- Growth management laws have sown contention.

- There is a feeling among rural residents of being governed by people who do not live among you. The people who make legislation must be governed by it.
- County government was originally intended to be a local government for the unincorporated areas.
- DDES does not follow its own rules, and its code enforcement officers are not necessarily aware of or following the law.

Kathy Myers, of Maple Valley:

- County government can't meet the needs of both urban and rural residents, when government is not accountable to rural residents on issues that them.
- The county is urbanizing rural lands such as Maple Valley, that are still basically rural communities, without proper planning or adequate consultation with residents. Citizens have protested to no effect.
- The Maple Valley 'donut hole' is being developed by the county at dense urban levels, without community consultation.
- The previous charter review commission recommended changes to rural governance, but the council did not accept them.
- DDES is a model of inefficiency.

David Field, of Hobart:

- The county budget office should be an autonomous unit, not part of the Executive's office. The budget can be used as a toy to coerce what the Executive wants, from the council.
- County budgets should be zero based, to justify expenditures and not to just spend the whole allocation and ask for more next year.
- DDES' fee revenues should be taken out of general budget. There is no incentive to provide a permit quickly. Development should have a flat and sensible fee structure.
- Persons 62 years and over with 10+ years in their home should be granted immunity from county-generated taxes. This will stop older people from being forced out of their homes, after they have already paid their share.

Warren Iverson, of Hobart, founding member of Maple Valley Area Council:

- Supports Mr. Carpenter's ideas; address divisiveness over land use issues in innovative and courageous ways that go beyond politics.
- To achieve better rural representation, reapportion the districts with 3 districts dividing the county north to south, 1 across the center from east to west, and 3 at-large.

Pat Traub, of Enumclaw, leader of the Enumclaw Forested Foothills Recreation Association

- One of our greatest challenges is to preserve our rural lifestyle, which is under attack. Residents live here to admire and enjoy the rural areas.
- King County government is the only option for unincorporated area residents, and that's why the county's representation is so important.
- Rural and urban interests do not have to be opposed. Ten years from now, we should be able to say we did something worthwhile that is going to last.

Cory Olson, of unincorporated Black Diamond, President of Friends of the Black Diamond Library:

- The King County Library System needs more oversight, of the governing board of trustees. The director of the system is the main problem, and the board has not removed him.
- There is a lack of communication and leadership in the library system.
- The Executive has also been a problem, in siting the new Black Diamond library.
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Anthony Hemstad, of Maple Valley, City Manager of Maple Valley (speaking as an individual):

- The county needs to agree to basic cooperation with the cities on changes to the urban growth boundary. Maple Valley should not be forced to urbanize, when there are areas closer to the urban core that are not developed.
- The Maple Valley 'donut hole' should not be developed at urban densities.

Richard Bonewits, of Maple Valley, chair of the Greater Maple Valley Area Council:

- The GMA is being skewed toward development by the county. Concurs with Ms. Myers that the key objective is to preserve the rural areas with all their character- the farms, the recreational areas, the views, the wildlife, the livestock, and the small community churches and schools.
- There is a fragmented and inadequate policy development process for rural areas. The process has not been reevaluated since its inception. The previous planning process, which required subarea plans and bottom-up planning, was more effective. It took
- There is inadequate representation of rural needs with respect to cities and the state.
- Local residents are also concerned about the high levels of growth in surrounding suburban cities, with attendant migration and traffic spillovers.

**Mr. Jensen opened the floor to questions from commissioners.**

*Representing rural areas:*

Ms. Lavender asked the audience to comment on what the best method of representation for rural areas would be- townships, UACs, a department of rural affairs, adjusting council staffing budgets?

Mr. Field answered that townships would be a good model to improve rural governance, but the state Attorney General invalidated the possibility. Try to get that decision reversed.

Mr. Hammond responded that better governance and representation would take a willingness by those in power, at every level, to give up some of their power. Townships would still mean that the council calls the final shots. The best option is a push for more UACs.

Mr. Carpenter replied that the solution could be as simple as requiring that the natural resources chair to come from a rural area. More radical things need to be done, but you can also make smaller internal tweaks.

Mr. Bonewits addressed the question by noting that the Commission on Governance did not recommend townships, but that a series of smaller steps could get the job done. Creating a new position for a Deputy of Rural Affairs would be a good idea, as would staff the appropriate county offices with people who have experience in rural affairs.

*Development of rural areas:*

Ed Magurk, of Hobart, asked Mr. Hemstad who gets the money from development. The county paid for new roads for a development, but how much did the developer pay to have the roads put in?

Mr. Jensen declined to allow this line of questioning to continue, and recognized Mr. Munro. Mr. Munro asked Mr. Hemstad why Maple Valley did not annex the 'donut hole'.

Mr. Hemstad replied that they cannot annex it because it's owned by King County and is zoned rural. Annexation zoning is not possible outside of the urban growth boundary. He noted that Maple Valley has already met their 20 year growth targets, and are not looking for a 30% addition to its population.

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